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## **Things You Should Know About...SWEEPSTAKES & CONTESTS**

Sweepstake and contest promotions are often used to entice consumers into spending money on magazines or other merchandise that they do not need and would not otherwise buy. Sweepstake and contest fraud can occur over the phone, by mail, or at your door. Understanding the following information can help you learn to identify illegitimate sweepstakes and contests that are intended only to separate you from your money.

### **“No Purchase Necessary”**

You’ve probably heard the phrase before. Well, it’s absolutely true...and a good phrase to remember when considering entering any sweepstakes or contest. If you have to buy a product or pay a fee to claim an award or prize, you have not won anything because you’ve essentially “bought” your prize. Some dishonest promoters or companies will tell you that if you do not order anything you will not be on the list for future sweepstake opportunities. Don’t buy it. It’s a trick designed to get you to make a spur-of-the moment decision. Other promoters may give you the impression that the more magazines you order, the closer you will come to winning the grand prize. Don’t buy it. Sweepstakes or contest promoters are not allowed to tie the odds of winning to the amount you purchase.

### **Remember**

If you submit an entry to sweepstakes, you must have an equal chance of winning even if you do not make a purchase.

### **Some Winning Tips**

While there are some legitimate contests and some very lucky winners, the chances of actually winning a valuable prize in your lifetime are very slim. In order to take the “con” out of contest...

- Always check the section of the promotion which describes your odds of winning
- If you purchase a magazine subscription or other product, make sure the seller gives you the total price, including tax and any credit or finance charges.
- Comparison shop - e.g., if you want to purchase a magazine, find out what the subscription costs when bought directly from the publisher.
- If you receive or are charged for any magazines or items that you DID NOT ORDER, question the company or agency that sent you the bill. If you are not satisfied with the result, contact the Attorney General’s Consumer Fraud Bureau.
- Any paper you sign can be a legally binding contract. Read the entire sales contract. Contracts should include the date of sale, seller’s name, company’s street address and phone number as well as a notice of cancellation form explaining your three-day right to cancel if the contract was signed in your home. Do not sign any contract or document with blank spaces.

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Printed by the authority of the state of Illinois.

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